The LLL SIG Newsletter

Fun and Creative Activities for Adult Learners

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Teaching adult learners can be a wonderful and rewarding experience for English language teachers. It provides a chance to instruct some of the most motivated students a teacher will come across during their career - a far cry from the usual struggles teachers encounter with younger learners. This article will discuss an extension program available for local adult learners near Toyo Gakuen University, the learners involved, and some fun and creative activities for the classroom.

The Institution and Extension Program

Toyo Gakuen University, located in Nagareyama, Chiba, offers an English language extension program. This program is open to adult learners who live in the vicinity of the campus. There are a variety of English language courses available, including news article discussion groups and conversation classes. The courses are taught by both native English speaking teachers and native Japanese speaking teachers alike. There are ten lessons during the first semester and twelve during semester two, at a length of ninety minutes per lesson. Each class consists of six to fifteen learners. This article will discuss the beginner level conversation course taught by a native English speaking teacher.

The Learners

The learners in the extension program comprise of local Nagareyama

residents who range from the ages of thirty to ninety years old. The class consists of mainly housewives and retirees from a variety of professions. The proficiency level of the learners involved in this particular course was a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. The main goals of the learners studying in the extension program are to keep their brains active, for travel purposes, and to have a better understanding of English culture.

The Activities

The number one goal of the teacher involved in this particular course is to provide interesting lessons that the learners want to attend. At the beginning of each semester, the teacher provides a survey to determine what the learners want to learn, offering options such as travel, food, sports, art, current events, music, books, movies, and so on. After examining the results of the survey, the teacher prepares lessons based on the topic or topics that the majority of the learners in the classroom chose, believing that providing learner autonomy helps maintain motivation and interest in the lessons. Each unit of study spans across five to six lessons.

Activities used during the travel, food, and sports units will now be discussed.

Travel (Show and Tell)

The activities used during the travel unit were designed to focus on the individual experiences of the learners. Most of the learners in the class were well-travelled and eager to share their experiences. Various lessons were held during the semester which focused on a variety of travel topics such as travel preferences, travel experiences, souvenirs, travel problems, and travel plans.

One excellent activity for sharing experiences is good old-fashioned Show and Tell. This English elementary school classic is easily adaptable and perfect for

English language classes. This activity promotes storytelling, discussion, and questions and answers. A worksheet (Appendix 1) was prepared and given to the learners as homework in order to allow them to prepare for the following lesson. This worksheet explained how Show and Tell is performed and provided useful expressions for the learners to use during their Show and Tell session. This activity was used during the souvenir portion of the travel unit. The learners were asked to bring in one of their favourite souvenirs which they had received from another person or had bought from themselves. On the day of the activity, one by one the learners were given a set time to present their souvenir to the class. Their classmates were encouraged to ask questions and discuss each item that was presented. The learners enjoyed reminiscing about their travels and sharing their experiences with the help of their international treasures.

Food (Recipe Exchange and Potluck Lunch)

During this unit of study, the learner's focused their attention on food. They learned how to describe food, talk about food, and how to read and follow recipes in English. The final project for this unit involved writing their favourite recipe in English using the recipes they had seen in class, and the vocabulary and expressions they had studied. During the final class, the learners prepared their dishes for homework, and brought them in to enjoy a potluck lunch. During the lunch, the teacher provided the learners with a copy of a class recipe book comprised of all of the recipes the learner's had submitted the week before. The teacher also included a few favourite recipes from her home country and family. While sampling the dishes, the learners were encouraged to discuss the food and recipes with each other using the language they had studied during the previous lessons. This activity provided an excellent and relaxing way to end a unit of study and

celebrate all they had learned during the semester.

Sports (Paper Ball Olympics)

For the sports unit, the learners participated in various sport-themed activities focusing on the Olympics, sports vocabulary and common phrases, telling sports stories, discussing sports, learning about sports from around the world, and reading and writing sport rules and game instructions. The final project for this unit required the learners to first analyze and interpret a set of rules involving a paper ball game (Appendix 2), and test if they had understood the rules and instructions by playing the game. Some portions of the rules were intentionally left vague or difficult in order to elicit feedback and allow the learners to think of ways to improve the rules and make them more clear and understandable. Then, in pairs or groups of three, the learners created their own paper ball games (Appendix 3). They were permitted to use paper balls and other items found in the classroom such as desks, chairs, scissors, tape, pencils, glue, and staples. One lesson was devoted to first analyzing and testing their understanding of the rules provided, and then creating their own games. For homework, the learners were asked to complete their set of rules. In the following lesson, the learners were given a short amount of time with their partners to compare and perfect their set of rules. Then each group was given a chance to test each other's games, going from one game to the next, analyzing and interpreting the rules, and playing the games. At the end of the class, each game was revisited one by one by the entire class. The game creators were asked to demonstrate their game. Once everyone was given a chance to see how the game was intended to be played, feedback on the rules was given by the other learners and teacher. This feedback included pointing out easy to understand parts of the rules, areas that could use improvement, and the language that could be used

to make these improvements. In the end, the learners voted for their favourite game, thus crowning the gold medal winners of the Paper Ball Olympics.

Conclusion

Each of these activities was designed to allow the learners to study and use English in a fun and creative way. Even though some of the activities seemed more appropriate for a younger set of learners, in the end, they worked very well with an older crowd. Part of the success of the activities could be attributed to giving the learners autonomy to choose the topics they would be studying, what they wanted to talk about during Show and Tell, what recipes they would share during the Recipe Exchange and Potluck Lunch, and what game they would create in the Paper Ball Olympics. This added even more motivation to an already motivated group of learners.

Task 1: Bring your favourite souvenir to class next week.

What is Show and Tell?

It's an activity for discussion and asking questions. Everyone brings an object to class. They 'show' the class and 'tell' everyone what the object is. Then everyone asks questions about the object.

What should I bring?

- Something that tells a story
- Something you really like
- Something that isn't embarrassing

Examples – photos, souvenirs, your favourite international collection, artwork you have made or bought which features a favourite travel destination, etc.

I got this <i>I</i>	was in Junior High	1.		
My grandmother	me this.			
I like this i	t's cute.			
This is a souvenir	Australia.			
This reminds me	when <i>I we</i> r	nt to the Chi	nese Olympics.	
			,	
of because	se	gave	from	when
	My grandmotheri I like thisi This is a souvenir This reminds me	My grandmother me this. I like this it's cute. This is a souvenir Australia. This reminds me when I were	My grandmother me this. I like this it's cute. This is a souvenir Australia. This reminds me when I went to the Chir	My grandmother me this. I like this it's cute. This is a souvenir Australia. This reminds me when I went to the Chinese Olympics.

<u>Task 3:</u> Think about and prepare what you will say about your souvenir.

You can: describe the object; talk about where you bought it or who gave it to you

Don't forget to bring something to show and tell next class!

Game title

Paper Ball Curling

Number of people

Two or four players

Objective

The person with the ball closest to the goal ball after 5 throws wins.

Equipment

5 green balls 5 yellow balls 1 pink goal ball 3 x 3 metres of empty floor space Pen and paper for marking the score

How to play

1. Find an area of empty floor space that is about 3×3 metres.

- 2. Make 5 green paper balls, 5 yellow paper balls, and 1 pink paper goal ball.
- 3. Stand at one end of the empty floor space.
- 4. Play rock, paper, scissors. The winner is Player A.
- 5. Player A will throw the green balls; Player B will throw the yellow balls.
- 6. Player A throws the pink goal ball anywhere on the empty floor space.
- 7. Player A then throws one green ball as close to the pink goal ball as possible.
- 8. Player B then throws one yellow ball as close to the pink goal ball as possible. Player B will continue to throw yellow balls until one of them is closest to the pink goal ball. When Player B's yellow ball is closest to the pink goal ball, Player A takes a turn.
- 9. Players continue to take turns after their ball is closest to the goal ball.
- 10. When all the balls have been thrown, the players check whose ball is closest to the goal ball. That player is the winner.

Special rules

- If the ball goes out of bounds, the player cannot throw the ball again.
- You can throw balls that hit and move the goal ball or your opponent's balls.
- If both players balls are touching the goal ball at the end of the game, the player with the most balls closest to the goal ball wins.

Writing game rules

Game title	
Number of people	
Objective	
,	
Equipment	
How to play	
Tiow to play	
Special rules	